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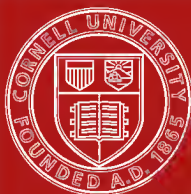
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A DILEMMA

A DILEMMA

A STORY OF MENTAL PERPLEXITY

BY

LEONIDAS ANDREIYEFF

Author of "Silence," "Red Laugh," etc.

ANDREEV, LEONID NIKOLAEVICH
" " " " " "

Translated from the Russian by John Courvos



PHILADELPHIA, PA.

BROWN BROTHERS

1910

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FOREWORD

THE story which follows is an analytical tragedy, and its hero, despite other differences, is related to the types given us by Dostoyeffski in *Crime and Punishment*, and by Bourget in *The Disciple*. These intellectual heroes, products of the Nineteenth Century, are bound to be with us during the period of our unrest. It is the story of the fanaticism of Reason; yet Reason *per se* is the soberest of things.

Dr. Kerzhentseff, the victim of the *Dilemma*, is a type of "Superman." Can it be that Zarathustra had dreamt of him in that dream in which he saw his face distorted in a mirror held up by a child? A too great consciousness of the power of his thought is at the bottom of the tragedy. He wished to make his mentality serve as a bridge where-

by to cross a thousand doubts, but the structure gave way, plunging him into those very waters which he so defiantly attempted to cross in confident security.

Sane or insane? is Dr. Kerzhentseff's dilemma, and this dilemma is not one but many, like a hydra-headed monster, the glance of whose multiple eyes is sufficient to stare one out of one's mental countenance. For madness can be so delicate a thing that it may become a difficult problem to distinguish it from the normal state. That a fine line sometimes separates the two, as imperceptible as the merging of day with night, is the chief idea delineated with mastery by Andreiyeff; and that the modern tendency to self-analysis, that fatal soul-surgery, is conducive of this unfortunate condition is also demonstrated with artistic skill.

Dr. Kerzhentseff's crime is committed in the name of Culture, and the retribution is worthy of Culture, being full of subtle questionings and refined tortures. He placed his fate in the custody of Thought. How clear,

how beautiful, how powerful it seemed! But no one may look on God's countenance and live. For the ways of Reason are labyrinthine, its clearness are abysses, its eyes gaze on ageless canyons blinding with sunlight and maddening, and its outlook is on time and space. Men's minds snap in trying to see too clearly. And though the world had never thought more clearly than now, never was it more confused. Everywhere is unrest. Men are groping, women are in revolt, children commit suicide. Our souls are sick.

Like Hamlet, our hero is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;" like him, too, he feigns insanity to carry out his subtle schemings, yet here is the vital difference: in spite of his modernity, Dr. Kerzhentseff harks back to the primitive for the motive of his murder. Practically he seeks revenge, while Shakespeare's hero is unquestionably the more noble (and more lovable), for he seeks justice itself. But that is another hair-splitting distinction.

Dr. Kerzhentseff's forceful logic confounds not only himself, but the experts, who inevitably are bound to disagree as to the prisoner's mental status, and the big question to the end remains unanswered. As it is, the experts themselves are on trial, and who will judge the experts? Aside from the fact that they are not immune from mind's direful malady and from the pitfalls of heredity, they must face a severe indictment, drawn up by the Russian author, involving the validity of their expertness. Those who have watched the battle of alienists in a recent interesting case in the New York courts can only too willingly concur in the unreliability of so-called expert judgment, which is divided against itself. How are we to believe a Janus-faced expertness?

Incidentally, from a New Jersey town comes an amazing story about a condemned murderer whose execution has been ordered delayed until he recover from mental ills from which he is suffering. Here is an

opportunity that no social satirist should neglect.

* * * * *

Apart from the problems with which *A Dilemma* deals, the story is undeniably a work of art, more powerful, if not so poetic, as *Silence*, a little tale whose generous reception by the American public and press has prompted the present publication in English of a later and more complex study by the same author. *A Dilemma* was first published in Russia in 1902, and though it did not cause the tremendous sensation aroused by *In the Fog*, which followed it, it nevertheless gave the critics something to talk about, and is, despite its chronological precedence, the finer story of the two.

The translator has taken warranted liberty with the title. In the Russian the story is called *Misl*, literally *A Thought*, yet possessing in this instance greater significance than the title would seem to indicate; as a study of mental perplexity, *A Dilemma* ought to do.

JOHN COURNOUS.

A DILEMMA.

ON the 11th of December of the year 1900 Anton Ignatyeff Kerzhentseff, a physician by profession, perpetrated a murder. The evidence presented in connection with the act itself, as well as certain circumstances which preceded the crime, gave cause to suspect the abnormality of Kerzhentseff's mental faculties.

Placed for purposes of investigation in the Elizavetinsk Psychiatric Hospital, Kerzhentseff was subjected to a severe and attentive surveillance of several capable alienists, the recently deceased Prof. Derzhembitzky being among the number. Here are the documents furnished in connection with the case by no less a personage than Dr. Kerzhentseff himself a month after the test had begun; together with other data they formed the groundwork of expert judgment.

I.

TILL the present moment, gentlemen experts, I have concealed the truth; but now circumstances compel me to reveal it. Realizing this, you will comprehend that this business is not at all so simple a matter as it would seem to the ignorant; not at all a matter of the strait-jacket or the hand-cuffs. The thing involved here is neither the one nor the other, but is more terrible than the two combined.

My victim, Alexis Konstantinovich Saveloff, was my companion in the *gymnasia* and in the university, though in our professions our ways were apart. I, as you know, am a physician; while he completed a course of jurisprudence. I cannot say that I did not love the man; he was always sympathetic toward me, and I never had a more

intimate friend than he. Notwithstanding the possession of these sympathetic traits, he did not belong to the class of men capable of commanding my respect. The astonishing softness and yieldingness of his nature, his strange uncertainty in the domain of thought and feeling, the capricious extremes of his views, and the unsoundness of his constantly changing judgments impelled me to regard him as a child or a woman. Those near to him, suffering now and then from his caprices, and at the same time, owing to an illogical human nature, loving him, found a justification for his shortcomings and their own attitude, by calling him an "artist." Indeed, this worthless word seemed to justify him completely, and that which to the normal mind would appear as silly was made to seem indifferent or even good. Such is the power of words that even I at one time succumbed to the popular misconception and eagerly overlooked the petty shortcomings of Alexis. Of grand faults, as indeed of all big things, he was incapable.

His literary productions amply attest this fact; they are full of things petty and empty, notwithstanding those short-sighted critics who delight to assail newly-revealed talents. Handsome and shallow were his productions, even as their author was handsome and shallow.

When Alexis died he was thirty-one years old, about a year younger than myself.

Alexis was married. Gazing upon his wife now, in mourning for her husband, you can have but a faint idea of her former beauty. She has grown ugly. Her cheeks are colorless and the skin of her face is flabby, aged—aged like a worn glove. And she has wrinkles. They are wrinkles now, but another year will pass and these will become deep furrows and trenches. How she did love him! And her eyes have ceased to sparkle, and they laugh no longer; formerly they were wont to laugh always, even when they ought to have wept. I have had the opportunity to see her for about a minute, having met her by accident at the district at-

torney's office, and was astounded at the change. She was powerless even to cast an angry look upon me. What a pitiful figure!

Only three persons—Alexis, I and Tatiana Nikolayevna—knew that five years ago, two years before the marriage of Alexis, I had proposed to Tatiana Nikolayevna and had been rejected. Of course, it is a mere conjecture about the three; more likely Tatiana Nikolayevna has another half-score of friends who had been apprised in detail of Dr. Kerzhentseff's one-time desire to marry, and of his humiliating rejection. I do not know whether she remembers that she laughed then; probably she does not remember—she laughed so often. Remind her, if you will: *on the fifth of September she laughed*. If she should deny it—and she will deny it—recall to her the circumstances. I, that strong man who never had shed a tear, stood before her and trembled. I trembled and saw how she bit her lips, and I already had stretched out my arms to embrace her, when she lifted her eyes, and there was

laughter in them. My arms remained suspended in the air. She began to laugh and she laughed for a long time—as long as it pleased her. Later, however, she apologized.

“Please forgive me,” she said, but her eyes laughed.

I also smiled, and though I could forgive her laughter, I never could condone my own smile. This was on the fifth of September, six o'clock in the evening, according to St. Petersburg time. I have added the last remark because we were at that moment in a railroad station; and I see now before me clearly the big white time schedule and the rows of figures running up and down.

Alexis Konstantinovich also had been killed precisely at six o'clock—a curious coincidence which might reveal much to the perspicacious person.

One of the reasons for placing me here has been the absence of motive responsible for the crime. Do you perceive now that a motive existed? Of course, it was not jealousy. The latter presupposes an ardent tem-

perament and a weakness of mental faculties—that is something directly antagonistic to a cool, reasoning nature like mine. Revenge? Yes, sooner that—if it is necessary to employ an old word for defining a new and unfamiliar emotion. The case is this: Tatiana Nikolayevna once more had caused me to blunder, and it irritated me. Knowing Alexis well, I was convinced that Tatiana Nikolayevna, married to him, would be unhappy and would long for me; therefore I insisted that Alexis, who was in love with her, should marry her. Only a month preceding his tragic death he remarked to me:

“It is to you that I owe my present happiness. Isn’t that so, Tanya?”

She glanced at me and said: “That’s true,” while her eyes smiled. I also smiled. Presently we all laughed, as, embracing Tatiana Nikolayevna—they never felt abashed before me—he added:

“Yes, brother, you missed your stroke.”

This misplaced and tactless joke shortened his life a whole week, as originally I had in-

tended to kill him on the eighteenth of December.

Their marriage turned out to be a happy one, and especially happy was she. His love toward Tatiana Nikolayevna was not intense; and in general he was not capable of deep love. He had his favorite occupation—literature—which carried his interests beyond the bounds of the bedchamber. She, however, loved only him, and lived only in him. He was a victim to physical indispositions, such as frequent headaches and insomnia, and these, of course, caused him much suffering. And she considered it a happiness to look after the sick man and to gratify his capricious desires. When a woman loves she becomes altogether incomprehensible.

Day after day I saw her smiling face, her happy face, young, beautiful, without care. I thought: this is my doing. I wished to give her a dissolute husband and deprive her of my company, but instead I have given her a husband whom she loves,

and at the same time she manages to keep me near her. Here is an explanation of this singularity: she was more clever than her husband, and loved to chat with me, and, having had her chat, she would go to sleep with him and be happy.

I cannot recall when the thought to kill Alexis first came to me. It appeared somehow imperceptibly; but from the first minute it became old, as if I had been born with it. I know that I wished to make Tatiana Nikolayevna unhappy, and that at first I had thought of various schemes less fatal to Alexis. I have been always an enemy of unnecessary violence. Taking advantage of my influence over Alexis, I had thought of causing him to fall in love with another woman or of making a drunkard of him (he had an inclination toward this last), but none of these plans was practical. The obstacle consisted in the fact that Tatiana Nikolayevna would have contrived to remain happy, even in the event of her husband's taking to another woman, or in spite

of having to listen to his drunken chatter and being compelled to accept his drunken caresses. It was essential to her that this man should live, and in one way or another she would have served him. Such slavish natures exist. Slave-like, they cannot understand or value the strength of others than their master. The world has seen clever women, good women and talented women, but it has yet to see a just woman.

I candidly admit that this is not for the purpose of securing your unnecessary condescension, but rather to demonstrate the straightforward and normal manner in which was born my resolution, and that it was a no slight struggle with my compassion towards the man whom I had sentenced to death. I had pity for the terror he experienced just before he died, and for those moments of suffering he endured when his head was being crushed. I had pity—I don't know whether you'll comprehend—for the head itself. There is extraordinary beauty in a harmoniously working living or-

ganism, and death, like disease, like age, is first of all deformity. I remember how, many years ago, upon graduating from the university, I had gotten hold of a young and beautiful dog having extraordinarily strong limbs. It cost me much mental effort to take its skin, as my experiment demanded. For a long time afterward I recalled the animal with regret.

If Alexis had not been so sickly and weak—who knows, perhaps I should not have killed him. To this day, however, I am sorry for his beautiful head. Tell this to Tatiana Nikolayevna, if you please. Beautiful, beautiful was that head. Its eyes were its only weakness. They were pale, without fire and energy.

I should not have killed Alexis had the critics really been justified in attributing to him the supreme literary gift. The roads of life are dark, and great is the need of masterly men as beacon-bearers. Each of them should be guarded as a rare jewel. It is these few who justify the existence of a

thousand good-for-nothings and the commonplace. *Alexis, however, was not a genius.*

This is not the place for a critical article, but if you will read the more well-known productions of the deceased you cannot but agree with me that they are unnecessary to life. They are necessary to a lot of satiated people in want of diversion, but not to life, nor to us, engaged upon solving life's problems. At a time when the author, employing the power of his thought and genius, should have created new life, Saveloff clung in his books to the old, not making an effort to solve life's hidden significance. His solitary story which appealed to me, encroaching as it did upon the domain of the unexplored, was a story called "A Secret"—that was the sole exception. Worse still, Alexis was beginning to show evidence of having "written himself out," his happy existence having deprived him of his last teeth, which are so essential to the "biting into" life and to the gnawing of it. He frequently spoke

to me of his doubts, and I saw that they were fundamental. I sounded him on his plans of his future labors exactly and minutely. His lamenting admirers may rest assured there was nothing new or grand in them. From among those near to Alexis only his wife failed to see the decline of his talent; nor would she ever have seen it. Do you know why? She did not always read her husband's productions. When I once made an attempt to open her eyes even slightly, she simply considered me a wretch. Seeing that we were alone, she said:

"You cannot forgive him something else."

"What is that?"

"That he is my husband and that I love him. If Alexis were not so attached to you . . ."

She faltered, and I anticipatigly finished her thought.

"You'd drive me out?"

Her eyes flashed laughter. And, smiling innocently, she pronounced slowly:

“No. I would let you remain.”

And I, understand, never, even by a single word or gesture, let her know that I continued to love her. I thought to myself: so much the better that she has guessed.

The thought of taking a man's life did not leave me. I knew that this was a crime severely punishable by the law; but then nearly all we do is considered as criminal; only the blind do not perceive this. Those believing in God consider a crime as committed before God; others consider a crime as before the people; such as I consider a crime as before myself. It would have been a great crime if, having decided it necessary to kill Alexis, I had failed to carry out this resolution. That people classify crimes as grand and petty, and call murder a grand crime, is nothing more than a conventional and pitiful lie before oneself—an attempt to conceal oneself from the answer behind one's own spine.

I did not fear myself—that was more important than all else. The most terrible

thing to the murderer, the criminal, is not the police, nor the court, but he himself, his nerves, the potent protest of his entire body trained in the familiar traditions. You will recall Raskolnikoff, that pitifully and absurdly lost man, and the benightedness of his like. I had given much time and much thought to this question, imagining myself as I should be after the murder. I will not say that I became convinced fully of my tranquillity. Such a conviction could not find existence in a thinking man capable of considering all possibilities. However, having gathered carefully all facts of my past, taking into account the strength of my will, the vigor of my unexhausted nervous system, my deep and sincere contempt of the existing morals, I could maintain a relative confidence in the successful issue of the undertaking. It would not be amiss to relate here one interesting fact out of my life.

Upon one occasion, when I was yet a student of the fifth semester, having stolen fifteen roubles of students' money confided to

my care, I asserted that the cashier had made a mistake in his accounts, and all believed me. It was more than a simple theft. It was not a case where the needy one stole from the rich man. Here was not solely a violated confidence; it was the deprivation of a hungry one, a comrade at that, and a student, and by a man with means—that is why they believed me. This action, no doubt, seems more contemptible to you than the murder of my chum. Isn't that so? I, on the contrary, recall that I felt jolly because I could do it so well and adroitly, and I looked into the eyes, directly into the eyes of those to whom I so boldly and freely lied. My eyes are dark, beautiful, frank—and they were believed. Above all, I was proud because I had felt no remorse. To this day I recall with particular gratification the menu of the unnecessarily festive dinner which I had ordered with the stolen money and had eaten with appetite.

Do I experience remorse even now—repentance of the act? Not a bit.

I feel sad. I feel intensely sad, as no other person in this world feels; and my hairs are turning grey; but that is something else. *Something else.* Something terrible, unanticipated, incredible in its fearful simplicity.

II.

Here was my problem. It was necessary not only that I should kill Alexis, but that Tatiana Nikolayevna should know that I had slain her husband, and that I should evade the punishment provided by the law. Aside from the fact that it might give Tatiana Nikolayevna another occasion for mirth, the idea of penal servitude did not at all appeal to me. I love life exceedingly. I love to see the golden wine play in the thin glass; I love, when weary, to drag myself towards the clean bed; I love to breathe in the pure air of the springtime, to see the beautiful sunset, to read interesting and clever books. I love myself, the strength of my muscles, the strength of my thought, clear and exact. I am happy that I am alone, and that not a single curious look has penetrated the depth of my soul with its

dark caves and abysses, at the edge of which the head grows dizzy. Never have I understood or known that which people call the weariness of life. Life is interesting, and I love it for the grand mystery imprisoned within it; I love it even for its rigors, for its ferocious vindictiveness and its satanically-gay play with people and events.

I was the sole person whom I respected. How then could I risk to send this person off to prison, where he would be deprived of all possibility to lead the so-essential to him, variegated, complete and deep existence? Even from your viewpoint I was right in desiring to escape prison. I am good at doctoring. Having means, I cured many poor people. I am useful—surely more useful than the murdered Saveloff.

It would not have been difficult to have escaped punishment. A thousand devices exist whereby to kill a man unnoticed, and I, in my physician's rôle, could have resorted easily to one of these. Among my thought-out and discarded plans, which consumed a

great deal of time, was this one: to inoculate Alexis with an incurable and loathsome disease. The objections to the plan are evident: the lingering sufferings of the victim himself, the something ugly about it all, its coarseness, and its somewhat too—well, it's not exactly clever; and finally, not even the illness of her husband would have deprived Tatiana of joy. One imperative demand of my problem was that Tatiana should know whose hand smote her husband. (Only cowards shrink before obstacles; such as I they only draw on.)

An accident, that great ally of able men, came to my help. And I wish to call your especial attention, gentlemen experts, to this detail: *Precisely an accident, i. e.*, something external, not depending upon me, served as the basis and motive for what followed. In a newspaper I stumbled upon an item concerning a cashier, or some clerk or other; (the clipping is probably at my home or in the district attorney's office), who simulated a fit of epilepsy and made a pretense

of having lost money during the attack—actually, of course, having stolen it. The clerk proved a coward, and confessed, revealing even the place of the stolen money; but the idea itself was not stupid but could be realized. To simulate insanity and kill Alexis in a moment of aberration, and then “to become cured”—this was the plan which, conceived in a moment, needed much time and labor to assume a more definite and concrete form. At that time I was acquainted with psychiatry only superficially, like any physician not a specialist, and I spent about a year in consulting authorities and in reflection. In the end I became convinced that my plan was altogether feasible.

First of all, the attention of the experts should be directed to hereditary influences—and my heritage, to my great joy, seemed altogether consistent. My father was a drunkard; one uncle, his brother, ended his life in the hospital for the insane, and finally, my only sister, Anna, now dead, suffered from epilepsy. It is true, that on my

mother's side all were healthy; still a single drop of the poison of madness is sufficient to affect several generations. In physical health I resembled my mother, but I was possessed of some harmless eccentricities which could be depended upon to do me service. My relative unsociableness; which is simply an indication of a healthy mind, preferring to spend its time in solitude, with self and books, rather than upon idle and empty chatter; could be misinterpreted as an unhealthy misanthropy; my soberness of temperament—non-seeking coarse, sensual pleasures—as a manifestation of degeneracy. My stubbornness itself in reaching a once resolved upon goal—plenty examples could be drawn upon in my rich life—would have received, in the language of the experts, the terrible name of monomania, the domination of fixed ideas.

The ground for simulation was, therefore, unusually favorable—the statics of madness were upon the face of things, it remained for dynamics to do the work. To the

unintentional touches of nature it would be necessary to add two or three successful brush strokes to make the picture of madness complete. And I delineated very clearly to myself how it should all be, not with programmatic thoughts, but with live images: even though I do not write stupid stories, I am far from deficient in artistic sense and imagination.

I saw that I was in a position to enact my rôle. A tendency to dissemble has been always in my character and was one of the forms whereby I strove to inner freedom. Yet in the *gymnasia* I simulated friendship: walked the corridor embracing someone, as do real friends, artfully making a frank, friendly utterance, and at the same time sounding the fellow. When the softened comrade revealed himself entirely, I cast aside from me his little soul and walked away with the proud consciousness of my own strength and inner freedom. This same duality I maintained at home among kin; as a home of the *Starover* sect has special

dishes for strangers, so I also had everything special for various people—a special smile, special conversations and candor. I observed that people commit against themselves much that is stupid, injurious and unnecessary, and it seemed to me that if I should begin to tell the truth about myself, I would become, as they, and all this stupidity and superficiality would dominate me.

It has pleased me always to be deferential towards those whom I despised and to kiss those whom I abhorred, which made me free and a lord over others. Hence, I never was conscious of a lie before myself—that more general and lowest form of human subjection. The more I lied to people the more unsparingly just I became before myself—a dignity at which few have arrived.

Generally speaking, I think that within me was concealed an uncommon actor, capable of enacting the naturalness of the play—reaching at times a complete merging with the character personified—with an indefat-

igable, cold control of mind. Even when reading a book I would enter entirely into the psychology of the represented character, and—would you believe it?—grown man that I am, I have wept bitter tears over “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.” How wonderful this faculty of the supple, sharpened, cultured mind—that of reincarnation! You live through a thousand lives; now you descend into the darkness of Hades; now you ascend the clear mountain heights; with one glance you observe the infinite universe. (If man is destined to become a God, his throne shall be a book. . .)

Yes. That is how it is. Incidentally, I wish to make a complaint about the rules here. They put me to bed when I wish to write, *when I must write*. The doors are permitted to remain open, and I am compelled to listen how some madman bawls. He bawls and he bawls: it is simply unendurable. Here you really can make a man go out of his mind, and then say that he was insane previously. And have they no extra

candle that I must injure my eyes with electric light?

Well then. I once even thought of going on the stage, but cast aside the stupid idea: simulation, which everyone knows to be simulation, has little value. Likewise, the cheap laurels of the official actor on government pay attracted me but little. As to the quality of my art you can judge from the fact that many donkeys consider me even now the most sincere and veracious of men. And what is strange: I have been always successful in deceiving not so much the donkeys—I said that in haste—as especially clever people; on the other hand, there exist two classes of beings of a lower order, whose confidence I never could succeed in obtaining. I refer to women and dogs.

Do you know that the respectable Tatiana Nikolayevna never believed in my love, and does not yet believe in it, I think, even after I had killed her husband. According to her logic, I did not love her, but killed Alexis because she loved him. And this nonsense,

doubtless, seems to her sound and convincing. Yet she is a clever woman!

The rôle of a madman did not strike me as being very difficult of enactment. Some of the necessary directions I got from books; others I had to obtain—like any actor worthy of the name—through my own creative faculty; the rest had to be left to be recreated by the public itself, whose emotions had been developed through constant contact with books and the theatre, where, by means of two or three vague contours, it had been taught to recreate live types. There still remained certain gaps to be filled; there was the prospect of a stern and erudite investigation by experts to which I should be subjected, but I looked for no serious danger even here. The extensive realm of psychopathology has been so little explored; there is yet so much that is dark and accidental, so much freedom for the imagination and subjectivity, that I boldly committed my fate into your hands, gentlemen experts. I trust I have not offended you. I do not wish to

reflect upon your scholarly authority, and am confident that you will coincide with me, as men accustomed to conscientious scientific thought.

. . . At last that fellow has ceased bawling. It is simply unendurable.

During the period that my plan still remained a project, a thought struck me, which hardly could have penetrated an insane mind. *This thought was concerning the danger of my experiment.* Do you comprehend? Madness is a fire dangerous for jesting. Having thrown a match into a powder magazine, one may feel greater safety than if but the slightest thought of madness should steal into one's head. And I knew this, I knew—yet did danger ever daunt a brave man?

Moreover, was I not conscious of my thought, firm and clear, as of hammered steel, and absolutely obedient to me? As a rapier of keen edge, it bent, pricked, bit, pierced through the web of facts; truly, as a serpent it glided noiselessly in unexplored and dark depths, concealed for ages from

the light of day; I held its hilt in my hand; it was the iron hand of a deft and experienced fencer. How obedient, expeditious and rapid was my thought, and how I loved it, my slave, my terrible power, my sole treasure!

. . . He howls again, and I am unable to continue. How awful to hear a man howl. I have heard many terrible sounds, but none so terrible as this, none so awful. There is nothing it resembles—it is the voice of a wild animal, passing through a human throat. It is something ferocious and frightened; free and yet piteous to abjectness. The mouth twists to one side, the muscles of the face become rigid, like ropes, the teeth show, dog-like, and from the dark opening of the mouth issues forth this disgusting, bellowing, whistling, laughing, wailing sound . . .

Yes. Yes. Such was my idea. Incidentally you will direct your attention, doubtless, to my handwriting, and I request you not to attach significance to the fact that at

times it trembles and seems to change. It is a long time since I have written; certain recent occurrences and insomnia have weakened me—hence the hand trembles occasionally. *It is something which used to occur even before.*

III

Now you understand the significance of the terrible fit into which I had fallen one evening at the house of the Kurganoffs. That was my first experiment and successful beyond all expectation. It is as if they really knew beforehand what was going to happen,—as if the sudden madness of a person in full health were altogether natural, and to be expected at any time. No one was astonished, and each tried to outdo the other in coloring my play with the play of his own fantasy. It is a rare gastriloquist who has such a fine troupe of naive, stupid, credulous people. Did they tell you how pale I was and how terrible? How cold—yes, precisely cold—sweat covered my entire body? How my eyes gleamed with an insane flame? When they told me later their impressions,

I seemed morose and depressed, but in truth I trembled from head to foot with pride, happiness and derision.

Tatiana Nikolayevna and her husband were not there that evening—I do not know whether you made note of that. It was not an accident; I feared to frighten her; or, still worse, to arouse her suspicion. If there existed a person who could see through my play, it was she and none other.

Nothing that occurred that evening was accidental. On the contrary, every detail, the most petty, was planned with care. I timed my fit to occur after supper; I chose that moment because there was sure to be a gathering, and those present would be affected somewhat by wine. I sat at the edge of the table, a little distance from the candelabra with the lighted candles, as I did not want to cause a fire or to burn my nose. At my side sat Pavel Petrovich Pospeloff, that fat pig whom for a long time I desired to play a trick. He is especially disgusting when eating. When I first saw him at this

occupation, the thought came into my head that eating is an immoral business. Everything occurred opportunely. Apparently no one noticed that the plate flying in fragments from the blow of my fist was covered with a napkin, so that I should not cut my hands.

The whole trick was astoundingly clumsy, even stupid, but I counted on that. They could not have comprehended a more subtle prank. I began by swinging my arms and talked "excitingly" with Pavel Petrovich, until that individual opened wide his eyes in amazement; I followed this by falling into "concentrated thought," which called forth the question from the solicitous Irene Pavlovna:

"What is the matter with you, Anton Ignatyevich? Why are you so sad?"

When they all turned their faces upon me I smiled tragically.

"Are you ill?"

"Yes. Just a trifle. My head feels dizzy. But do not concern yourself, please. It will pass away shortly."

That reassured the hostess, but the suspicious Pavel Petrovich looked disapprovingly askance. And when, a moment later, smiling with gratification, he lifted a glass of wine to his lips, I quickly struck the glass from under his nose—then my fist descended on the plate with a crash. The fragments flew, Pavel Petrovich sprawled and grunted, the women shrieked, and I, showing my teeth, pulled the table cover containing all—it was an exceedingly humorous picture.

Then I was surrounded and held; someone brought water, another led me to an armchair; and I roared like a lion confined in a "Zoo," and glared with my eyes. It was all so absurd, and they all were so stupid that, believe me, the desire was born in me to smash a few of those jaws in earnest, taking advantage of the privileges of my condition. Naturally I restrained myself.

Gradually I grew calmer, while my breast heaved convulsively; and I rolled my eyes

and gnashed my teeth and asked weakly such questions as:

“Where am I? What is the matter with me?”

Even that absurd French phrase “Where am I?” succeeded with this folk, and not less than three imbeciles made haste to say:

“At the Kurganoffs.” Then in a sweetened voice: “Do you know, dear doctor, who is Irene Pavlovna Kurganoff?”

Seriously, they were too petty for big play!

After a day—having given sufficient time for reports to reach the Saveloffs—I talked with Tatiana Nikolayevna and Alexis. The latter dismissed the matter with a single question:

“What was that rumpus you raised at the Kurganoffs?”

Saying this, he turned on his heels and entered his working chamber—from which I gathered that if I had become actually mad he wouldn't have choked himself on account of it. To make up for it, his spouse proved

especially loquacious, fervid and, of course, insincere, in the expression of her sympathy. And then . . . not that I regretted what I had begun, the question simply occurred to me: Is it worth while?

“Do you love your husband intensely?” I said to Tatiana Nikolayevna, whose gaze followed Alexis. She turned quickly.

“Yes. What of it?”

“Oh, nothing, only—” and after momentary silence, cautious and full of unuttered thoughts, I added: “Why have you no confidence in me?”

She quickly and directly looked into my eyes, without replying. During this minute I forgot that some time in the past she laughed, and my mind was free from malice against her, and that which I was doing seemed to me unnecessary and strange. It was my weariness, natural after a severe ordeal of the nerves, and it lingered but a single moment.

“And may one trust you?” asked Tatiana Nikolayevna after a prolonged silence.

“Of course not!” I replied in jesting tone, while within me flared up an extinguished flame. A force, a courage, a determination stopping before no obstacle—these I felt in me. Proud of the success thus far achieved, I resolved to go boldly to the end. In combat is the joy of life.

The second fit occurred a month after the first. There was less premeditation upon this occasion, and this was really unnecessary in view of the general plan. Indeed, I had no especial intention to arrange the matter for this evening, but when circumstances are favorable it is foolish not to make use of them. And I remember clearly how it all happened. We sat in the drawing-room, when I became very sad. With great mental vividness I realized—this was a rare occurrence—that I was a stranger to all these people and that I was alone in the world—I, forever confined within this head, within this prison. They all became disgusting to me. And in my rage I shot out my fist and

shouted something coarse and saw with joy the fright in the paled countenances.

“Good-for-nothings!” cried I. “Miserable, contented good-for-nothings! Liars, hypocrites, vipers! I hate you!”

It is true that I wrestled with them, then with the lackeys and coachmen. I was conscious, however, that I wrestled, and knew that it was for a purpose. I felt pleasant in punishing them, telling them straight to their faces the truth about themselves, what sort they were. Is everyone who dares tell the truth mad? I assure you, gentlemen experts, that I was altogether conscious that, when striking, I felt the contact of my hand with a live body experiencing pain. Later at home, where I was alone, I laughed and thought what a wonderful, excellent actor I was. Then I went to bed and spent the night reading a book; I even can recall the author—it was Guy de Maupassant. I enjoyed him, as always, and afterward slept like an infant. Do madmen read books and enjoy them? Do they sleep like infants?

Madmen do not sleep. They suffer, and in their head everything revolves. Yes, revolves and falls. . . And they desire to howl, to scratch themselves with their nails. They desire to go down on all fours and crawl softly, softly, and then to spring up all at once and to shriek out:

“Aha!”

And to laugh. And to howl. To raise up one's head and to howl long—long, protractedly—protractedly, piteously—piteously.

Yes. Yes.

And I slept like an infant. Do madmen sleep like infants?

IV.

Nurse Masha asked me last evening:

“Anton Ignatyevich! Do you never pray to God?”

She spoke seriously and she believed that I would answer sincerely and seriously. And I replied, without a smile, as she wished:

“No, Masha, never. But if it will afford you pleasure, you may make the sign of the cross over me.”

Maintaining the same grave demeanor, she made the sign of the cross over me thrice, and I was very glad that I afforded a minute of joy to this excellent woman. Like all highly-bred and free people, you, gentlemen experts, do not direct your attention to the servant; but to us prisoners and “madmen” it is given to observe her closely and to make astonishing discoveries occasionally.

I may take it for granted that it never has occurred to you that the nurse Masha, hired by you to look after the insane, *is herself insane?* But such is the fact.

Observe her walk, noiseless, gliding, somewhat timid and astonishingly guarded and graceful—it is as if she were walking between invisible, drawn swords. Examine her face well, when she is not observing and is unaware of your presence. When Masha sees one of you approach her face assumes a serious, grave aspect, and smiles indulgently—the very same expression which dominates your face at the moment. The explanation is that Masha possesses the strange and significant faculty of reflecting involuntarily in her face the expression of other faces. Occasionally she will look at me and smile. It is a pale, reflected smile—not her own. And I surmise that I must have smiled when she looked at me. At times Masha's countenance will express suffering, will seem morose, her brows will contract at the nose, the corners of the mouth

will descend; the entire face will age ten years and grow sombre—evidently my own face is thus at times. Now and then I frighten her with my gaze. You know how strange and somewhat awesome is the gaze of every deeply thoughtful man. Seeing me thus the eyes of Masha will open wide, the pupils will grow darker, and, approaching me noiselessly, with uplifted hand, she will do something friendly and unexpected—smooth my hair or arrange my dress.

“Your belt will become undone,” she will say, while her face will maintain its frightened expression.

However, there are moments when I see her alone. And when she is alone her face strangely seems to lack all expression. It is pale, handsome and enigmatic, like the face of a corpse. Cry out: “Masha!” and she will turn, smiling with *her own* gentle and timorous smile, and ask:

“Is there anything I can bring you? . . .”

She is always bringing or taking away something, and if there is nothing to bring,

take away or arrange, she will show signs of worryment. Her noiselessness is remarkable. Not once have I noticed her drop anything, or make a noise. I have attempted to talk with her about life, and she is strangely indifferent to everything, even to murders, conflagrations and other horrors which affect uncultured people.

“Do you realize they are being killed, wounded, and they leave behind them at home little hungry children?” said I to her concerning war.

“Yes, I understand,” she replied, and then, as if lost in thought, asked: “Had I not better bring you some milk; you have eaten so little to-day?”

When I laugh she responds with a somewhat frightened laugh. Never has she been in a theatre, she does not know that Russia is an empire and that there are other empires; she cannot read, and her acquaintance with the New Testament is limited to the quotations she has heard read in the church. Every evening she goes down on her knees and prays at length.

For a long time I considered her simply a limited, blunt being, born for bondage, but a single incident compelled me to change my view. You probably know, you must have been informed, that I have lived through one nasty minute here, which, of course, doesn't demonstrate anything except weariness and a temporary collapse of one's strength. *I refer to the towel incident.* Being stronger than Masha I could have killed her, as there was no one present but us two, and if she had cried out or caught my hand . . . but she did nothing of the kind. She merely said:

“No need of that, *golubchik*.”*

I have thought often about this phrase and till now cannot grasp the astonishing power concentrated in it and felt by me. It is not in the words, which in themselves are meaningless and empty; rather is it somewhere in the unknown to me and unfathomable depths of Masha's soul. She knows something. Yes, she knows, but cannot or will

* Diminutive of *dove*, a term of endearment very common in Russia.

not say. I have tried often to secure from Masha an explanation of her words, but she cannot explain.

“Do you think suicide a sin? That it is forbidden by God?” I asked.

“No.”

“Then why no need of that?”

“Just so. Simply no need for it,” she said smilingly, and inquired: “May I bring you something?”

Without a doubt she is insane, but quiet and useful, like many insane people. Please do not molest her.

I have permitted myself to depart from my narrative, as something Masha did yesterday has recalled to me memories of childhood. I do not remember my mother, but I had an aunt named Anphisa, who made the sign of the cross over me every night. She was a taciturn old maid, with pimples on her face, and she felt ashamed when my father joked with her about a husband. I was still a youngster aged eleven when she strangled herself in the tiny barn where we kept our coals. Later she con-

tinued to appear to father, and that jolly atheist ordered prayers and masses.

My father was very clever and talented, and his speeches in court made not only nervous women, but also serious and balanced people weep. Only I did not weep, listening to him, because I knew him and knew that he himself understood little of what he was saying. He possessed considerable knowledge, many ideas and even more words; and his words and ideas and knowledge frequently combined themselves successfully and beautifully; but of this he had no comprehension. *I often even doubted as to whether he existed*—to such an extent did he exist in sounds and gestures that it sometimes occurred to me that this was not a human being, but an image flashed by a cinematograph, combined with a gramophone. He did not comprehend that he was a human being, that to-day he lived and that to-morrow he might die, and he sought nothing. And when he went to bed he ceased to move and fell into a slumber; to all appearances he

had no dreams and ceased to exist. With his tongue—he was an attorney—he earned his thirty thousand a year, and not once was he astonished or thoughtful over this circumstance. I recall having visited with him a newly-purchased estate, and pointing at the trees in the grounds I remarked:

“Clients?”

He smiled indulgently and replied:

“Yes, my boy, talent is a big thing.”

He drank much, and his intoxication found expression in more rapid movements, which finally would cease altogether, and he would end invariably by falling into a deep slumber. Everyone considered him extraordinarily endowed, and he often asserted that had he not become a famous attorney he would have been equally distinguished as an artist or as an author. Unfortunately, this is true.

Least of all he understood me. Once we were threatened with the loss of all our property. The thought gave me anguish. Nowadays, when only wealth gives freedom,

I do not know what I should have become if fate had placed me in the ranks of the proletariat. I cannot picture to myself without anger anyone daring to place his hand upon me, compelling me to do that which I do not wish, purchasing for money my labor, my blood, my nerves, my life. This horror, however, I experienced only for one minute, as it immediately dawned upon me that such as I never remain poor. But father did not understand that. He sincerely considered me a dull youth and viewed with apprehension my supposed helplessness.

“Oh, Anton, Anton, what will become of you?” he would say. He himself seemed weary; his long, unkempt hair descended over the forehead; his face was yellow. I replied:

“Don’t worry about me, papa. As I am not talented, I will kill Rothschild or rob a bank.”

My father became angry, as he accepted my answer as an untimely and flat jest. He saw my face, he heard my voice and never-

theless accepted it as a jest. Wretched pasteboard clown, through misapprehension thou art called a man!

He did not know my soul, although the outward order of my life perturbed him, as he did not enter into its understanding. I was an apt pupil at the *gymnasia*, and this distressed him. Once when we had visitors—lawyers, litterateurs and artists—he directed his finger at me and said:

“I have a son; he is the first in his class. What have I done that God should punish me so?”

And they all laughed at me, and I laughed at them all. Even more than by my successes he was distressed by my conduct and attire. He would enter my room purposely to rearrange, unnoticed by me, the books on the table, and to create even a little bit of disorder. My neat way of combing my hair robbed him of his appetite.

“The superintendent has ordered a close hair cut,” I would say seriously and respectfully.

He scolded vehemently, but my entire inner being throbbled with contemptuous laughter.

Nothing, however, aroused my father's ire so much as my copybooks. Once, when drunk, he looked through them, seeming very hopeless and comical in his despondency.

"Haven't you ever made a blot?" he asked.

"Yes, papa, it happened once. It was when I was doing my trigonometry."

"Did you lick it up?"

"What do you mean by 'lick it up?'"

"Just what I said—did you lick up the blot of ink?"

"No, papa, I applied blotting paper."

My father waved his hand with a drunken gesture and growled as he arose:

"No, you are no son of mine. No! No!"

Among my despised copybooks, however, was one which afforded him gratification— notwithstanding the fact that it contained not a single crooked line, not a blot or erasure. It contained, however, approximately

the following: *My father is a drunkard, a thief and a coward.*

This was followed by some details, which, out of respect to my father's memory and to the law, I consider unnecessary to state.

I now recall one forgotten fact, which I think should prove of interest to you, gentlemen experts. I am very happy to have recalled it, very happy. How could it have slipped my memory?

We had in our house a maid-servant named Katia, who was the mistress of my father, and simultaneously my mistress. She loved father because he gave her money, and me because I was young, had beautiful dark eyes and did not give her money. The night that my father's corpse lay in the parlor I entered Katia's room. It was not far from the parlor, whence could be heard clearly the voice of the chanter.

I think that the immortal spirit of my father must have experienced complete gratification!

This is really an interesting fact, and I

don't understand how I could have forgotten it. To you, gentlemen experts, it may seem a small matter, a childish prank, having no serious significance, but that isn't so. It was a hard struggle, gentlemen experts, and the victory was not bought cheaply. My life was at stake. Had I trembled, turned back, proved thyself a faint-hearted lover, I should have killed myself. *I recall, that was decided.*

What I did was not an easy matter for a youth of my years. Now I know that I fought with a windmill, but at that time it appeared to me in a different light. It is difficult for me to relate now all that I had lived through, but I can recall the feeling—it seemed as if with one act I had demolished all laws, divine and human. And I trembled terribly, to the point of the ridiculous; nevertheless I nerved myself, and when I entered Katia's room I was prepared for her kisses like a Romeo.

At that time I was yet a romanticist. Happy time, how distant it is! I remember,

gentlemen experts, that returning from Katia I stepped before the corpse, crossed my arms on my chest like Napoleon, and with laughable pride gazed upon the corpse. Then I shuddered, frightened at seeing the shroud stir. Happy, distant time!

I fear to think upon it, but it is possible that I never have ceased to be a romanticist. And I came near being an idealist. I believed in human thought and its boundless force. The entire history of man seemed to me as one triumphant thought, and that was not so long ago. It is terrible for me to reflect that my entire life has been an illusion, that all life long I have been a fool, like that crazy actor once confined in the next ward. He had gathered from everywhere strips of blue and red paper, and he had designated each strip a million roubles; he had begged them from visitors; had stolen and carried them from the closet, to the amusement of the keepers, whom it gave an opportunity to indulge in vulgar jests. He sincerely and

deeply detested them, but me he liked, and upon parting handed me a million.

“It’s a trifle,” said hé, “only a million, but you will forgive me, I have such expenses, such expenses.”

Taking me aside, he explained in a whisper:

“I am about to start to Italy. I want to banish the Pope and to introduce new mon-
eys into the country—these. Then, on Sun-
day, I will declare myself a Saint. The
Italians will rejoice; they are always happy
when given a new Saint.”

Have I not lived upon this million?

It is strange for me to reflect upon the fact that my books—my companions and friends—have remained in their cases and silently guard that which I considered the wisdom of the earth, its hope and happiness. I am aware, gentlemen experts, that whether or not I am insane, from your viewpoint I am a good-for-nothing and a scamp—you should see this good-for-nothing when he enters his library!

Go, gentlemen experts, examine my house—you will find it interesting. In the left-hand upper drawer of my writing-table you will discover a detailed catalogue of my books, pictures and trifles; there also you will find the keys to the cases. You are men of culture, and I am confident that you will conduct yourself toward my property with due respect and care. *I also request you to see that the lamp doesn't smoke.* There is nothing worse than this smoke; it gathers everywhere, and it then takes the hardest kind of labor to get rid of its effects.

REMARK.

The assistant doctor Petroff has refused me chloralamide in the dose which I demand. I am a physician and know what I am doing, and if it is refused me I will take decisive measures. I have not slept two nights, and do not in the least desire to become insane. I demand that chloralamide be given me. I demand it. It is *infamous* to make one insane.

V.

After my second attack they were afraid of me. In many houses the doors were quickly closed at my approach. At accidental meetings acquaintances shrank from me, smiled meanly and inquired significantly:

“Well, *golubchik*, how is your health?”

The situation developed to such a degree that I could have committed the most unlawful act and would not have lost the respect of those present. I looked at people and thought: If I so wish it, I may kill this one and that one, and nothing will happen to me. That which I experienced at this thought was something new, pleasant and a bit terrifying. Man ceased to be something strongly defended, a something which we fear to touch; in a word, some sort of shell fell from

him; he seemed naked, and to kill him seemed easy and even tempting.

Fear, like a dense wall, protected me from inquisitive eyes, so that the necessity for a third preliminary attack was avoided. Only in this instance did I depart from the formulated plan; for the strength of genius does not build itself a frame for its confinement, and, to conform with changing conditions, does not even hesitate to alter the entire course of battle. It yet remained for me to obtain official absolution from past sins and sanction for those of the future—I refer to the necessity of securing scientifico-medical testimony of my illness.

At this time a happy concurrence of circumstances made it possible for me to turn to a psychiatrist, without it seeming more than by merest chance, or by obligation. This, perhaps, was an unnecessary but artistic touch in the interpretation of my rôle. It was Tatiana Nikolayevna and her husband who sent me to the psychiatrist.

“Do, please, go to the doctor, dear Anton

Ignatyevich," said Tatiana Nikolayevna. Never before did she call me "dear." Apparently it was necessary to pass for mad to receive this meaningless caress.

"Very good, dear Tatiana Nikolayevna, I'll go," I replied submissively. We three—Alexis also being present—sat in the drawing-room, subsequently the scene of the murder.

"Yes, Anton, you must go without fail," reiterated Alexis in a tone of authority, "or else you might do some mischief."

"What sort of mischief could I do?" I timidly protested before my stern friend.

"Who knows? You may break someone's head."

I fondled in my hand a heavy, cast-iron paper-weight. Looking now at that object, now at Alexis, I asked:

"Head? You say—head?"

"Yes, head. Catch a thing like that on your head and you're done for."

It was becoming interesting. *It was precisely the head, and precisely with that thing*

that I had planned to crush it, and now that same head was telling how it would all end. It was telling and smiling, as without care. And yet there are people who believe in presentiments, and that death sends before it invisible heralds. What nonsense!

“One can’t do much with this thing,” said I. “It is altogether too light.”

“So you think it’s too light!” returned Alexis hotly, as he snatched the paper-weight from my hand and flourished it by its thin handle several times in the air. “Just try it!”

“Yes, I know. . .”

“No, take hold and see.”

I smiled, as unwillingly I took the heavy object. Just then Tatiana Nikolayevna interfered. Pale, her teeth chattering, she said, or rather shrieked:

“Stop that, Alexis, stop that!”

“Why, Tanya? What is the matter with you?” said he in an astonished tone.

“Stop that! You know I don’t like such jokes.”

We laughed, and the paper-weight was replaced on the table.

On my visit to Professor T—— everything happened as I had anticipated. He was cautious, controlled in his utterances and grave; he inquired whether I had any relatives in whose care I could trust myself; he counselled me to go home, take a rest and live quietly. Assuming the privilege due me as a member of the medical profession, I made a slight attempt at remonstrance. My boldness removed whatever doubts may have remained in the physician's mind, and he definitely placed me in the ranks of the demented. I trust, gentlemen experts, you will not attribute undue significance to this harmless jest aimed against one of our colleagues. As a scholar, Professor T—— undoubtedly deserves respect and honor.

The few days which followed were among the happiest of my life. Sympathy was extended me in my rôle of invalid, visits were paid me, and everyone addressed me in a broken, clumsy tongue. Only I knew that I

was perfectly healthy, and I enjoyed to the full the well-planned, mighty labor of my mind. In a consideration of all that is wonderful and incomprehensible of life's riches, nothing can be found to equal the human mind. There is divinity in it, a pledge of immortality and an indomitable force acknowledging no obstacles. People are overcome with ecstasy and wonderment when they behold the snowy summits of huge mountains. If they only would understand themselves, neither mountains, nor all the wonders and beauties of the earth, could transport them to such a degree as the consciousness of the power of thought. The simple mental process of the laborer as he expediently lays one brick upon the other—that is the supreme marvel and the deepest mystery.

I enjoyed my thought. Innocent in her beauty, she gave herself up to me with passion as a mistress; served me like a slave; and upheld me like a friend. Don't take it for granted that all these days spent at home

between the four walls were employed only in thinking about my project. No, that was all clear and prepared. I meditated upon many things. I and my thought played with life and death and soared high, high above them. Among other things I solved during those days two very interesting chess problems over which I had labored for a long time without success. Probably you are aware of the fact that three years ago I participated in the international chess tourney and was second only to Lasker. Had I not been an avowed enemy of publicity and continued to contend, *Lasker would have been compelled to surrender his kingdom.*

From the moment that the life of Alexis was delivered in my hands I was strangely disposed towards him. It was pleasant for me to think that he lived, drank, ate and rejoiced, simply because I permitted it. It was a feeling akin to that of a father toward a son. What alarmed me was his health. Notwithstanding his ill health, he was unpardonably careless, refusing to wear a

waist-jacket and venturing outdoors without galoshes in the most threatening, raw weather. Tatiana Nikolayevna reassured me. She paid me a visit and told me that Alexis was in sound health and even slept well, which was unusual for him. Overjoyed, I requested Tatiana Nikolayevna to take with her a gift I had intended to make Alexis—a rare volume which accidentally fell into my hands and had struck for some time the literary man's fancy. Possibly the gift was a mistake from the standpoint of my plan. My action could be suspected as a premeditated manœuvre; but I wished so much to afford Alexis pleasure that I decided to run a small risk. I even ignored the circumstance that the gift sacrificed something of the artistic effect of my play.

Upon this occasion I was very amiable and frank, and made a favorable impression on Tatiana Nikolayevna. Neither she nor Alexis had witnessed a single one of my attacks, and hence it was difficult, even impossible, for them to imagine me as mad.

“Come and see us,” said Tatiana Nikolayevna at parting.

“Musn’t do it,” said I smilingly. “Doctor forbade.”

“Oh, fiddlesticks! That doesn’t mean us. In our house you are at home. And Alexis misses you.”

I promised, and *never did I make a promise with such assurance of fulfillment as this one.* When reflecting upon these happy coincidences, does it not strike you, gentlemen experts, that Alexis had been condemned not by me alone, but also *by someone else?* In truth, however, there was no one else. Nothing could be more simple or logical.

The cast-iron paper-weight lay in its place, when on the eleventh of December, five o’clock in the afternoon, I entered the drawing-room of the Saveloffs. Both Alexis and Tatiana had been accustomed to rest the hour preceding dinner, which usually occurred at seven o’clock. They greeted me effusively.

“Thanks for the book, brother,” said Alexis, grasping my hand. “I was about to visit you, when Tanya told me that you were quite well again. We are going to the theatre this evening. Will you join us?”

A conversation began. I decided not to dissemble at all that evening—it was an occasion when the absence of dissembling was the subtlest kind of dissembling—and giving myself up to the mental exhilaration of the moment, I spoke at length and well. If the admirers of Saveloff’s glories only knew how many of “his” best ideas had their inception and development in the brain of one unknown Doctor Kerzhentseff!

I spoke clearly, precisely, emphasizing each phrase, at the same time keeping my eye on the hand of the clock, thinking that when it should point at six I would become a murderer. I said something funny and they laughed, and I made an effort to retain an impression of the sensation of one who was about to become a murderer. I understood the life process in Alexis not in the ab-

stract, but rather in the physical sense—the beating of his heart, the coursing of the blood through the veins, the suppressed vibrations of the brain, and then—the interruption of this process, the cessation of the heart and the blood flow, and the death of the brain.

What would be its last thought?

Never did the clearness of my consciousness reach such height and power. Never was the sensation of the many-sided, harmoniously-working *I* so complete. Truly a god: not looking, I saw; not listening, I heard; not thinking, I understood.

Seven minutes remained, when Alexis lazily arose from the divan, stretched himself and went out.

“I’ll be right back,” he called after him.

I did not want to look upon Tatiana Nikolayevna, so I made my way to the window, threw aside the draperies and stood still. Without looking, I was conscious that Tatiana Nikolayevna had glided quickly through the room and was standing beside

me. I heard her breathing, and knew that she was not looking through the window, but upon me, and I was silent.

“How beautifully the snow sparkles!” said Tatiana Nikolayevna, but I remained unresponsive. Her breath came quicker, then seemed to cease.

“Anton Ignatyevich!” said she, and stopped short.

I remained silent.

“Anton Ignatyevich!” she repeated in the same irresolute tone, and now I looked at her. Suddenly she tottered back, almost fell, as if she had been thrust back by the terrible force that was in my glance. She tottered and threw herself towards her husband, who had entered the room.

“Alexis!” she mumbled. “Alexis . . . He . . .”

“Well, what about him?”

Without smiling, but in a jesting tone, I said:

“She thinks that I want to kill you with that thing.”

Then, in an unperturbed manner, without attempt at concealment, I picked up the paper-weight, and, raising it in my hand, calmly approached Alexis. He, without blinking, gazed upon me with his pale eyes and repeated:

“She thinks . . .”

“Yes, she thinks.”

Slowly, easily, I began to raise my hand, and Alexis also slowly began to raise his, without removing his eyes from me.

“Hold a moment!” said I sternly.

The hand of Alexis remained where it was, while he, pale, still keeping his eyes upon me, smiled incredulously with his lips alone. Tatiana Nikolayevna uttered a strange cry, but it was too late. I struck him with the sharp edge nearer the temple than the eye. And when he fell I bent over and struck him two more times. The district attorney declared that I had struck him several times, because his head was badly crushed. But that is untrue. I struck him

only *three times*: once when he was standing, and twice on the floor.'

It is true that the blows were very hard, but there were *only three*. That I remember for certain—*three blows*.

VI.

Please do not attempt to make clear what is crossed out at the end of the fourth part, and in general do not attach undue significance to my markings or accept them as evidences of deranged thought. In the strange position in which I find myself, I admit I am forced to exercise the greatest care, as you may well understand.

The dusk of night always acts strongly upon an exhausted nervous system, and that is why we are visited so frequently at night by horrible thoughts. On that night, following the murder, my nerves were, of course, in a particularly tense state. Despite my self-control, it is no jest to kill a man. After tea, having made my toilet, manicured my nails and changed my dress, I called in Maria Vasilyevna to keep me company. She was

my housekeeper and a substitute for a wife. I think she had a lover on the side, but she is a pretty woman, gentle and not greedy, and I easily reconciled myself with this slight fault, which is almost unavoidable when a man obtains love for money. This stupid woman was the first to strike me a blow.

“Kiss me!” said I.

She smiled stupidly and remained unmoved.

“Come, now!”

All of a sudden she trembled, blushed and with frightened eyes drew herself appealingly toward me from across the table and said:

“Anton Ignatyevich, little soul, go to the doctor!”

“What next?” I exclaimed angrily.

“Oh, please, don’t shout so, I’m afraid! I’m so afraid of you, little soul mine, little angel!”

Yet she knew nothing of my fits, nor of the murder, and I had been always kind with her and reasonable. It was to be inferred

that there was something in my person that other people did not have—something that frightened. The thought flashed through my mind and was gone quickly, leaving a strange sensation of cold in the legs and spine. It dawned upon me that Maria Vasilyevna must have learned something from the servant-maid or had stumbled across some spoiled apparel discarded by me, and this altogether naturally explained her fright.

“Leave me!” I commanded.

Then I retired to the divan in my library. I had no desire to read; my entire body felt weary, and my condition in general was such as experienced by an actor after a brilliantly played rôle. It was pleasant to gaze upon the books and pleasant to think that some time later I would read them. I was pleased with my entire apartment, with the divan and with Maria Vasilyevna. There flashed through my mind fragments of phrases from my rôle. Mentally I reënacted certain motions which I had made, and occasionally critical thoughts glided languidly:

In such and such a situation it could have been better said or done. However, I was much gratified with my improvised "Hold a moment!" This will seem flimsy to him who himself has not experienced such an incredible instance of the power of inspiration.

"Hold a moment!" I repeated, closing my eyes, and smiled. My eyelids began to grow heavy, and I wanted to sleep, when languidly, very simply, like the other thoughts, there entered into my head a new thought, dominating with all the qualities of *my* thought: clearness, preciseness and simplicity. Languidly it entered and remained. Here it is, speaking, as it were, in the third person:

"It is very possible that Dr. Kerzhentseff is really insane. He thought that he simulated, but he is really insane—insane at this very instant."

Three or four times this thought reappeared, but I still smiled, uncomprehending:

"He thought that he simulated, but he is really insane—insane at this very instant."

When I realized . . . at first I thought that Maria Vasilyevna had uttered this phrase, because it seemed as if there were a voice, and this voice appeared to be hers. Then I thought it was the voice of Alexis. Yes, Alexis, who was dead. Then I understood that it was my thought, and this was terrifying. Clutching my hair, I found myself somehow standing in the middle of the room. I mumbled:

“So that’s how it is. All is ended. That which I feared has happened. I approached too closely to the border line, and now there is only one thing before me—madness.”

When they came to arrest me, I appeared, according to their words, in an awful state—disheveled, in torn apparel, pale and terrible. But, oh, Lord! To live through such a night and not to go out of one’s mind—does it not indicate the possession of an invincible brain? And, really, I only tore my attire and broke a mirror. Apropos, permit me to make a suggestion. If it ever falls to the lot of any of you to live through that

which I had lived through this night, hang a mirror in the room where you will toss about. Hang it the same as you do when there is a corpse in the house.' *Hang a mirror!*

It is terrible for me to write about it. I fear that which I must recall and tell. But I dare not delay it longer, and perhaps with half-words I may only heighten the terror.

That evening!

Imagine to yourselves a drunken snake, yes, yes, precisely a drunken snake: it has saved its venom; it has increased its agility and swiftness, and its teeth are sharp and poisonous. It is drunk, and it is in a closed room, where are many trembling people. With its cold body it savagely glides among them, coils around their legs, buries its fangs in the very face, in the lips, and coils itself into a ball and stings into its own body. And it seems that it is not alone, but a thousand snakes toss about and sting and devour themselves. Such was my thought, the same in which I believed, and in the sharpness and

poison of whose teeth I saw my salvation and safeguard.

The single thought scattered in a thousand thoughts, each of which was strong and hostile. They circled in a wild dance, and their music was a monstrous voice, sounding as from a horn, and issuing from some invisible depth. *This was an evasive thought, the most terrible of all snakes, as it concealed itself in the darkness.* From within my head, where I held it strongly, it entered into the secret recesses of the body, into its dark and invisible depths. And from thence it cried out, like a stranger, like an escaping slave, insolent and bold, in the consciousness of his security:

You thought that you simulated, but you were insane. You are small, you are bad, you are stupid, you, Dr. Kerzhentseff. Some sort of a Dr. Kerzhentseff, insane Dr. Kerzhentseff! . . .

Thus it cried out and I did not know whence came that monstrous voice. I do not even know who uttered it; I call it a *thought*,

but perhaps it was not a thought. The other thoughts, like birds hovering over flames, circled in the head, while this one cried from somewhere below, above, the sides, where I could not see it or catch it.

And the most terrible thing which I experienced was the consciousness that I did not know myself and never did. As long as my *I* found itself within my brilliantly lighted head, where all moved and lived in law-conforming order, I had understood and known myself, had reflected upon my character and plans, and was, as I had thought, a lord. Now, however, I saw that I was not a lord, but a slave, wretched and helpless. Imagine to yourself that you are living in a house containing many rooms, that you occupy one room and think that you dominate the entire house. And suddenly you discover that the other rooms are occupied. *Yes, occupied.* Occupied by some mysterious beings, perhaps people, perhaps something else, and the house belongs to them. You wish to learn who they are, but the door is locked,

and no sound issues therefrom, no voice. At the same time you are conscious that precisely there, behind the silent door, your fate is being decided.

I approach the mirror. . . Hang a mirror. Hang one!

I do not remember what happened afterward, until the arrival of the court authorities and the police. I asked what hour it was, and was told it was nine o'clock. For a long time I found it difficult to realize that only two hours had elapsed since my return home, and only three since the murder of Alexis.

I ask your forgiveness, gentlemen experts, for treating of a moment so important from your standpoint, of the terrible state following the murder, in such general and indefinite terms. That, however, is all I remember and all that I can express by means of the human tongue. It is impossible for me to express in human language the terror I experienced in that brief space of time. Aside from this, I cannot vouch for the actuality of that which so vaguely im-

pressed itself upon my mind. Perhaps it was not that which happened, but something else. Only one thing I remember distinctly—it was a thought, or a voice, or perhaps something else:

“Dr. Kerzhentseff thought that he simulated madness, but he is actually insane.”

I have just felt my pulse: 180! And that at the mere recollection of it!

VII.

In the preceding pages I have written much that was unnecessary and absurd, and unfortunately you have received and read them. I fear that it will give you a false conception of my person, as well as of the actual condition of my mental faculties. However, I have faith in your knowledge and in your clear intellect, gentlemen experts.

You understand, of course, that only grave reasons could have induced me, Dr. Kerzhentseff, to reveal the entire truth concerning the murder of Saveloff. And you will easily understand and appreciate them when I tell you that I do not know even now whether I feigned madness to kill and go unpunished, or killed because I was actually mad; that, probably, I shall never know. The nightmare of that evening is gone, but

it has left in its wake sparks of fire. I have no absurd fears, but I feel the terror of a man who has lost all. I have the cold consciousness of the fall of perdition, deceit and insolubility.

You learned men will argue about me. Some of you will say that I am mad, others will demonstrate that I am normal, and will admit only certain limitations in the name of degeneracy. With all your learning, however, you cannot demonstrate my madness or my normality as clearly as I can. My mind has returned to me, as you shall be convinced. It lacks neither in power nor in keenness. Excellent, energetic thought, giving even its enemies their due!

I am mad. Shall I give you reasons?

First of all, I will be judged by hereditary influences, those same influences the discovery of which rejoiced me so exceedingly when I first conceived my plan. The fits I had in my childhood. . . Guilty, gentlemen. I wished to conceal from you this detail about the fits, and have written that from

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childhood on I have enjoyed perfect health. Not that these trifling, short-lived attacks alarmed me to any extent. Candidly, I did not wish to encumber my account with unimportant details. Now this detail becomes necessary to a strictly logical structure, and, as you see, I give it unhesitatingly.

Therefore, hereditary influences and the attacks testify to my susceptibility to psychic illness. It began, unknown to myself, considerably prior to my plan. Dominating, however, as *all madmen*, with an unconscious cunning and a faculty to conform insane acts to norms of sober reflection, I began to deceive, not others, as I had thought, but myself. Borne along by a strange power, I made it appear that I went of my own accord. One can finish the model from the remaining evidence as from wax. You will agree with me.

It is not worth while to show that I did not love Tatiana Nikolayevna—that a true motive for the crime did not exist, but was invented. Whether in the strangeness of my

plan, in the cold-bloodedness of its execution, or in the attention to the innumerable details, one may detect easily the same unreasoning will. The very cunning and development of my thought preceding the crime demonstrate my abnormality.

“Wounded, death awaiting, in the arena I played,
The dying gladiator enacting. . .”

Not a single detail out of my life did I leave unrevealed. I searched through my entire life. I gave the aspect of madness to all my steps, to all my words; and in each case I made the mood fit the word and the thought. It seems, and this is the most astonishing thing of all, that even until tonight I have entertained the thought: perhaps I am actually mad. Yet somehow or other I have avoided the thought and ignored it.

While demonstrating my madness do you know what I have perceived? That *I am not mad*—that is what I have perceived. I will explain.

The leading fact behind my hereditary impulses and my fits is degeneracy. I am of the degenerate, whose like can be found in large numbers if only sought for more diligently, even amongst you, gentlemen experts. This gives a substantial key to the rest. My moral views you may attribute not to conscious reflection, but to degeneracy. Truly, moral instincts are lodged so deeply that only in some deviation from the normal type is complete freedom from them possible. As to science, it maintains a too bold attitude in its generalizations, relegating all such deviations to the domain of degeneracy, even where physically the man may boast of the perfections of an Apollo, or the health of the lowest idiot. So be it. I have nothing against degeneracy—it brings me among excellent company.

Nor will I defend my motive for the crime. I tell you altogether candidly that Tatiana Nikolayevna really had wounded me by her laughter, and the offence lodged very deeply, as it happens with hidden, soli-

tary natures such as mine. Suppose this is untrue. Suppose even that I did not love her. Is it not possible to admit that by killing Alexis I simply had attempted to test my powers? Do you not freely admit the existence of men who, risking their lives, clamber inaccessible summits simply because they are inaccessible; and yet you do not call them mad? You dare not pronounce as mad Nansen, that mighty man of the expiring century! Moral life also has its poles, and one of these I tried to reach.

You are confused by the absence of jealousy, vengeance, cupidity and similar really stupid motives, which you have become accustomed to consider as the only ones that are real and normal. Hence, you men of science judge Nansen together with those fools and ignoramuses who even consider his enterprise as madness.

My plan . . . It was unusual, it was original, it was bold to audacity; but then was it not intelligent from the viewpoint set by my purpose? It was precisely my inclination

to dissimulation, already explained reasonably and fully, that inspired the plan. Madness? Is then genius really insanity? Cold-bloodedness? But is it absolutely necessary that a murderer should tremble, grow pale and be agitated? Cowards always tremble, even when embracing their servant-maids. Is then bravery madness?

How simply my own doubts of my health explain themselves! Like a true artist I threw myself too deeply into my rôle, identified myself temporarily with the represented character and for a moment lost my aptitude for self-account. Will you say that even in the courts, there is none who, playing among the lawyer-actors, struggling daily Othello, has felt the actual need to slay?

Sufficiently convincing, isn't it, most learned gentlemen? Do you not experience a strange consciousness of my seeming sanity when I try to prove my madness and the converse feeling of seeming madness—when I try to prove my normality?

Yes. That is because you do not believe

me. . . I, too, do not believe myself, as I do not know *whom* in me to believe. Shall it be in thought, dastardly and worthless—that unfaithful servant who waits upon all? It is good only with which to clean one's boots, and I made it my friend, my god. Off with you from the throne, wretched, impotent thought!

What am I then, gentlemen experts—in-sane or not?

Masha, charming woman, you know something that I do not know. Tell me, of whom shall I seek help?

I know your answer, Masha. *No, I don't mean that.* You are a good and gracious woman, Masha, but you know neither physics nor chemistry. Not once have you been to the theatre, and, busily bent upon your daily tasks, you do not so much as suspect that the object upon which you live twirls. It twirls, Masha, it twirls, and we twirl with it. You are a child, Masha, a dull-witted creature, almost a plant, and I

envy you exceedingly, nearly as much as I contemn you.

No, Masha, not you shall answer me. It is untrue; you do not know anything. Within one of the dark chambers of your ingenuous domicile lives something very useful to you, but in my house this chamber is empty. That something which had lived there died long ago, and on its grave I have erected a magnificent monument. *It died, Masha, died, without hope of resurrection.*

What am I then, gentlemen experts, insane or not? Pardon me if I, with such rude persistence, dog you with this question; but then you are "men of science," as my father called you when he wished to flatter you; you possess books and you dominate with clear, precise and infallible human thought. It is likely that half of you will maintain one opinion, the other half of you will maintain another; but I will believe you, learned gentlemen, believe the one and the other. Tell me, then . . . and to assist your enlightened minds I will reveal an interesting little fact.

During one calm and peaceful evening passed between these white walls I observed that Masha's countenance, each time it met my eyes, expressed fear, confusion and a subjection to something irresistible and terrible. Presently she departed, and I sat on the made bed and continued to think about one thing and another. And I yearned to do strange things. I, Dr. Kerzhentseff, wished to howl. Not shout, but howl, like that fellow. I wished to tear my clothes and to scratch myself with my nails. I wished to seize my shirt at the collar, and at the start go slowly, slowly, and then tear it asunder, with one quick jerk, to the very bottom. And I, Dr. Kerzhentseff, wished to go down on all fours and crawl. All around was calm, and the snow beat against the window, and somewhere not far off silently prayed Masha. And I reflected long upon what to do. If I should howl I would be heard, and trouble would ensue. If I should tear my shirt it would be noticed on the morrow. So very shrewdly I chose the third: I would

crawl. No one could hear me, and if caught I would say that a button came off and I was looking for it.

As long as I tried to hit upon a choice the feeling was that of contentment; it was not at all terrible, it was even pleasant; so that I recall I dangled my foot. Presently I reflected:

“But why crawl? Am I really insane?”

All at once a terrible feeling came upon me, and simultaneously I wished to do all: crawl, howl, scratch. And I became angry.

“Do you wish to crawl?” asked I. But it was silent. The desire was gone.

“No, you do wish to crawl,” insisted I. And it was silent.

“Well, crawl then!”

So, tucking up my sleeves, I went down on my fours and crawled. And when I had traversed about half of the room in this manner, the absurdity of it aroused my risibility, so I sat me down on the floor and laughed, laughed, laughed.

With my habitual and unextinguished

faith in the possibilities of knowledge, I thought that I had discovered the source of my insane desires. Evidently the desire to crawl, as well as other desires, were the result of auto-suggestion. The persistent thought that I was a madman had called forth the insane desires, and as soon as I had gratified them it seemed that such desires were absent and I was not insane. The argument, as you see, is very simple and logical. But . . .

But then I did crawl? I did crawl? What am I—a madman justifying himself, or a normal man leading himself out of his mind?

So help me, oh, erudite men! Let your authoritative word incline the scales to one side or the other and solve this terrible, ferocious dilemma. And so I wait! . . .

Vainly I wait. Oh, my dear dull-heads—are you not I? Does not the same dastardly human thought, ever lying, treacherous, illusory, labor within your bald heads as within mine? And wherein is mine inferior to yours? If you should venture to prove me

insane, I shall prove to you that I am normal; if you should try to prove me normal, I shall prove to you that I am insane. You will say that it is forbidden to steal, kill and deceive because it is immoral and criminal, and I will demonstrate that one may kill and plunder and that it is very moral. And you will think and speak, and I will think and speak, and we all shall be right, and none of us shall be right. Where is the judge who can decide between us and find the truth?

You have one formidable advantage which confers upon you the possession of truth: you did not commit a crime, you are not under judgment, and you have been invited, with substantial fees, to investigate my psychic condition. Ergo, I am insane. On the other hand, if you had been placed in confinement here, Professor Derzhembitzky, and I had been invited to observe you, then you would have been the madman and I the privileged bird—an expert, a liar, who differs from other liars only in that he lies not otherwise than under oath.

It is true, you have killed no one, have not stolen for the sake of stealing; and when you hire a cabby you consider it obligatory to haggle him out of a small coin, which demonstrates your spiritual health. You are not insane. However, something might happen, altogether unexpectedly. . .

Suddenly on the morrow, now, this moment, after you had read these lines, there comes into your head a stupid, but unwary thought: Perhaps I am insane? What will be your position then, professor? What a stupid, absurd thought—what reason is there to go out of one's mind? But try if you will to banish it. You have drank milk and thought it pure until someone said that it was mixed with water. Then an end—no more pure milk.

You are insane. Have you no desire to crawl on all-fours? Of course, you have none. What normal man wants to crawl? Well, for all that? . . . are you not disturbed by the appearance of just a slight desire, altogether slight, altogether trifling,

mirth-provoking, to glide off the chair, and to crawl a little, just a little? Of course, no such desire appears. Whence could it appear within a normal man, who only a moment ago drank tea and chatted with his wife? Yet, do you not experience a something unusual in your legs, though previously you had not experienced it, and a strange feeling in your knees: a heavy numbness wrestling with the desire to bend the knees, and then . . . *And actually, Professor Derzhembitzky, is there anyone to restrain you if you wish to crawl a bit?*

No one.

But don't crawl yet for a little while. I need you still. My battle is not yet ended.

VIII.

One of the manifestations of the paradoxicalness of my nature is that I exceedingly love children, altogether small children, just when they are beginning to lisp and resemble all tiny animals: pups, kittens and diminutive snakes. Even snakes can be attractive when young. One serene, sunny day in autumn, I witnessed the following little scene: A very small girl, in a wadded overcoat and a broad-brimmed bonnet, from under which were visible only her rosy cheeks and her little nose, wished to approach a very little, thin-limbed, slender-headed dog, standing tremblingly with its tail between its legs. And suddenly the tot became scared, turned on her heels, and, looking like a little white ball, scampered over to her nurse, in whose lap she hid her face, making no outcry and shedding no tears. As to the pup, it blinked

affectionately and bent its tail as if frightened, while the face of the nurse seemed so good and simple.

“Do not fear,” said the nurse, as she looked smilingly at me, and her face seemed so good and simple.

I do not know why, but I have recalled often the little maiden, while yet free, while planning the murder, and here. Gazing upon that lovely group, under the bright autumn sun, I experienced the strange feeling of one who possessed the solution to something, and my projected murder seemed to me like a cold lie from out of another, altogether different world. That both of them, the little girl and the little dog, were so small and lovely, and that they laughably feared each other, and that the sun shone so brightly—all was so simple and full of benign and deep wisdom, as if namely here, in this group, was located the key to existence. Such was the feeling I experienced. And I said to myself: “I shall have to think about this”—but I thought about it no more.

I do not remember now the meaning of the incident; painfully I try to grasp it, but cannot. Nor do I know why I have related this amusing and unnecessary tale, when I have so much that is more serious and important to tell. *It is urgent that I should finish.*

The dead we will permit to rest in peace. Alexis is dead; it is a long time since he began to decompose; he is no more—the devil with him! There is something pleasant in being dead.

Nor will we speak of Tatiana Nikolayevna. She is unhappy, and I eagerly join in the general sympathy; but what is her unhappiness and all the unhappiness of the earth compared with that which I, Dr. Kerzhentseff, am living through now! Not a few wives in the world lose their beloved husbands, and more husbands remain to be lost! We will leave them—let them weep!

But here, within this head . . .

You comprehend, gentlemen experts, the terrible happening. I loved no one on earth except myself, and it was not the vile body,

loved by the vulgar, that I loved in myself—I loved my human thought, my freedom. I never have known anything surpassing my thought; I worshipped it—and did it not deserve it? Did it not, like a giant, wrestle with the entire world and its delusions? It lifted me upon the summit of a high mountain, and I saw how far below me swarmed little people with their animal passions, with their eternal dread of life and death, with their churches, liturgies and prayers.

How mighty I felt, how free, how happy! Like a medieval baron secluded in his impregnable castle, truly an eagle in his nest, proudly and imperiously surveying the valleys below—so I was, invincible and proud in my castle, behind these bones of the cranium. A lord over myself, I also was a lord over the world.

I have been betrayed—basely, insidiously; thus women betray, and slaves—and thought. My castle became my prison. My enemies fell upon me in my castle—where's salvation? In the impregnability of

the castle, in the thickness of its walls is my perdition. My voice cannot penetrate outside, and who is so strong as to save me? No one. For none is stronger than I—and I am the sole enemy of my “I.”

Base thought has betrayed me who so intensely believed in thought and loved it. It has not lost in beauty; it is not a whit less bright, keen or elastic—it is still like a rapier, but its hilt is no longer in my hand. And it is slaying me, its creator, its lord, with the same stolid indifference with which I once employed it to slay others.

Night comes on and I am seized with unspeakable terror. I was strong and my feet stood firmly upon the earth, and now I am thrown into the emptiness of boundless space. Exceeding great and terrible is my solitude—behind me, before me and around me a yawning emptiness. It is the fearful loneliness of one who lives, feels and thinks, and is incomprehensibly alone; how small I seem, absurdly null, and so weak that I expect to be extinguished any moment. It is an

ill-boding solitude; in myself I constitute but an infinitesimal part; within myself I am surrounded and suffocated by enemies, morosely silent and mysterious. Whither I go they go with me; I am solitary midst a vast emptiness, and cannot confide in myself. It is the solitude of madness, and I have no means of knowing who I am, because my lips, my mind, my voice, are all given to utter the thoughts of the unknown *they*.

One cannot live thus. Meanwhile the world slumbers and husbands kiss their wives and learned men read their lectures, and the beggar rejoices in the penny thrown his way. Oh, stupid world, happy in thy stupidity, terrible will be thy awakening!

Who amongst the strong shall come to my aid? None! None! Where shall I seek that eternal something to which I may cling with my piteous, powerless, awesomely solitary "I?" Nowhere! Nowhere! Oh, dear, dear little girl, why is it that towards thee I stretch my blood-stained hands? Art thou not human like myself, and equally insignifi-

cant and lonely and subject to death? Is it that I pity thee or that I invite thy pity; but I would, as behind a shield, hide me behind thy helpless little body, from the hopeless void of ages and space. But no, no, it is all a lie!

I will ask you, gentlemen experts, to confer upon me a great and important service, and if you are possessed even of a little humanity you cannot refuse me. I trust we understand each other sufficiently not to believe each other. And if I should request you to say in court that I am in a normal state least of all shall I believe you. You may decide for yourselves, but no one can decide for me the question:

Did I simulate madness in order to slay, or did I slay because I was mad?

But the judges will believe you and sentence me to that which I wish: hard labor.* Please do not place a false construction upon my intentions. I do not repent of slaying

* Murder is punishable in Russia by penal servitude. Only where the crime perpetrated involves military treason, or has a political aspect, is capital punishment resorted to.

Saveloff; I do not seek in punishment an expiation of sin; and if it is essential that in order to demonstrate my well-being I should kill someone, presumably for plunder, I shall kill and plunder with pleasure. But in penal servitude I seek something else, I myself do not know what.

I am being drawn toward these people by a vague hope, that in their midst, among violators of your laws—murderers and thieves—I shall find unknown sources of life and once again be on terms of friendliness with myself.

Supposing that I am doomed to disappointment, that hope should deceive me—I still desire to be with them. Oh, I know you well! You are cowards and hypocrites; your peace of mind is your first concern, and you would gladly confine in the insane asylum every thief who has stolen a loaf of bread—in your overzealousness you would acknowledge yourself as madmen rather than disturb your pet theories. I know you well. The criminal and the crime—that is

your perpetual anxiety; that is the terrible voice coming from an unknown abyss; that is the inexorable condemnation of your wise and moral life, and howsoever you wad your ears with cotton that voice penetrates—it penetrates! And I wish to go to them. I, Dr. Kerzhentseff, wish to take a place in the ranks of this much-dreaded army—as an eternal reproach, as one who asks and awaits an answer.

I do not cringe before you, but I demand that you report me as in normal health. Lie, if you do not believe it. However, if you pusillanimously wash your learned hands and sentence me to the insane asylum, or open the doors to freedom, I forewarn you in a friendly way that I'll commit some considerable unpleasantries.

I acknowledge no judge, no law, no forbidden thing. All is permissible. Can you imagine a world, having no laws of gravitation, having no above nor below, in which everything is a matter of whim and chance? I, Dr. Kerzhentseff, am that new world. All

is permissible. And I, Dr. Kerzhentseff, shall prove that. I will simulate normality. I will attain freedom. I will spend the remainder of my life in learning. I will surround me with your books, I will take from you all the might of your knowledge, of which you are so proud, and will seek the one thing of which the world has stood in need for so long a time. *That will be the explosive essence.* The equal of its force has not been seen: it is more powerful than dynamite, than nitroglycerine, more powerful than the very thought of it. I possess talent, I am persistent, I will find it. *And when I do find it, I shall scatter in the air your accursed earth, which has so many gods and not one eternal God.*

Upon his appearance in the court room, Dr. Kerzhentseff maintained a very calm demeanor, and remained during the entire proceedings in one and the same non-expressive attitude. He replied to questions indifferently and impassively, occasionally

calling for their repetition. Once he aroused the mirth of the select public that crowded the court room in large numbers. It was when the presiding judge turned with some order to the usher, and the accused, evidently not having heard or because of abstraction, arose and asked loudly:

“What? You tell me to go?”

“Go where?” asked the astonished presiding official.

“I don’t know. I thought you said something.”

The crowd laughed, and the presiding judge explained to Kerzhentseff what was the matter.

Four expert psychiatrists were called to the stand, and their opinions were equally divided. After the speech of the district attorney, the presiding judge turned to the accused, who had refused to accept the services of an attorney.

“Accused, what have you to say in your justification?”

Dr. Kerzhentseff arose. He slowly sur-

veyed the judges with his dull, unseeing-like eyes and glanced at the public. And those upon whom fell that heavy, unseeing gaze experienced a strange and painful sensation: it was as if out of the hollow orbs of a skull there had glanced upon them nothing less than death itself, mute and impassive.

“Nothing!” replied the accused.

Having cast another look upon the people gathered in judgment upon him, he repeated:

“Nothing!”

SILENCE

BY LEONIDAS ANDREIYEFF

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